

# Oxford Democrat.

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THE STORY TELLER.

From Doubt's Miscellany.

Forgiveness.—The Return.

BY ALBERT CROWLEY.

The wind was north-east!

Everybody knows that the wind can't help

being thoughtfully and lovingly cold when it

comes from that quarter, and to be the place to

get him an introduction. I do not see the use

of it, if he could, for taking a long journey, when

he knows at starting he will only be received in

a cold and cutting manner, is folly.

The wind, then, was north-east, as near as

could be guessed in the dark. If you turned your

face to that quarter, you might almost feel cer-

tain it was, as the whistling sharpness seized up

on all promences with such a numbing feel

that it made your profile a matter of doubt.

Your face became too tight for a smile, and the

tips of your fingers painfully obtrusive; rubbing

your hands was a labor in vain; to put them in

your pockets, in such cases, most advisable,

as it dispels the cold air which creeps in the

insidious manner all over you—into your

very boots, notwithstanding your patent straps.

The wind was positively north-east, and work-

ed away in the most industrious manner, to do

credit to the quarter from whence it came, un-

doing all that a soft south-west had been doing

in a damp way, for days.

It turned the mud into hardbake, and licked

up as much of the puddles as it could, and then

finished off by framing and glazing them in the

cheapest and most fanciful manner. The roads

were as hard as the solid rock, giving a sound to

every footstep, enough to startle itself. Knock!

knock! knock!—hammer! hammer! hammer!

went the merry sales—men, women and children,

very little children and all!

All the undertakers, living where they are

never liked, could not have come up to it, even

with their unaccountable multiplied knockings.

It was as if the cold-hearted north-east was mak-

ing a gigantic coffin, at a short notice, to bury

the summer and autumn in. Like an energetic

advocate for the early closing movement, it put

up its sparkling first-work shutters, over every

pane, so that the wretched ones might as well

have been up, for what you could see of the goods

and wares in the shopkeepers' windows.

Carters and working-men began to behave

themselves with both hands, in the most inso-

lently manner, as if they were not ashamed of

themselves. Every body seemed to aim at unusual velocity,

carrying out the decision that they were putting

on the steam, by the volume of smoke like breath

that rolled palpably around them. Yet every-

body appeared pleased, although the tears did

come into their eyes, and their respiration be-

came alternately hot and cold.

It was certainly bracing and invigorating, send-

ing the warm blood to the heart, and giving life

to pleasant fancies, thoughts of home and com-

fortable fireplaces, and pitiful thoughts for those

without them. A north-east wind appears to be

an old-fashioned visitor, yet it has upon the doors

of our hearts, and the doors of shelter for the

poor, that only open at its bidding. Even in its

severity it brings clarity in its hand, and, with

its cold finger, points out to us our duties, too

often neglected at other times. So the north-east

which is not so bad after all.

The wind came mounted in the foregoing

thoughts was a foretaste of a few winters

past, and, having named its point, went the way

of all winds, with particular way that is I do

not pretend to know, for although we are pre-

dictably certain as to where it comes from, it there

leaves its path in wonder, where it goes to is a

matter.

Long coaches were then on the road, at their

very best. I had a companion to whom I shall

indeed, the gentleman who came over for an

hour and a half on Sunday mornings to preach

from some distant village. He being only a very

small visitor, his coat was very little seen. My

uncle, in the kindness of his heart excused

him; 'Poor fellow,' said he, 'he has two more

churches to attend to.'

We had progressed some miles on our journey,

and found the cold getting more severe at every

mile; consequently, upon the first stoppage to

change horses we alighted to knock some life and

feeling into our feet. At the door of the little

inn, a small covered cart drew on one side to

give us room. After ordering something warm,

we popped into the large kitchen, invited by the

roaring fire which illumined the whole place.

There, around the blaze, sat some poor shudder-

ing wretches, who, we understood, were being

paroled to their parishes, in the little cart which

we had seen on our entrance. One more particu-

larly interested us, from her extreme old age

which, from appearance, must, have been up-

wards seventy. The cold seemed to have made

her insensible; her almost equally frozen com-

panions were attempting, by every attention, to

bring back some life into the poor old creature.

'She's blind, too, poor old soul,' said one rough

looking fellow, who was rubbing her bony hand

between his palms, as he saw our pitying looks;

'she'll never live the way down, I'm sure; it's

come on so bitter, and that'll draw the cold

through us dreadful.'

'Where is she going to, poor soul?' said my

pitying uncle, as he drew the back of his hand

across his eyes.

'Thirty miles on, sir,' answered the man; 'the

village of—'

'My uncle turned his eyes towards me;—the

very village—his own!'

'I do not know her face,' said he.

'I believe, sir, she's been a long time away in

foreign parts, or somewhere; I don't know right-

ly,' continued the man.

'Poor thing! poor thing!' muttered the kind

old man; 'she must not go on—it would be worse

than murder. Landlady,' said he, turning to the

kind-hearted woman who had brought in a cup

of hot tea for the poor creature, 'Black Will's

coach comes through here in an hour, she must

go with him, I'll say. Put her inside. He'll set

her down here a kind-hearted fellow. Do what

you can for her, there's good soul.'

As he said all this, in a hurried tone, he kept

gazing upon the death-like features of the old

creature, and gazing from one poor shivering ob-

ject to another his hot glass of brandy and water.

He drew out his purse, and put some money in

to the hand of the landlady. 'Give her what

you can to do her good,' continued he, 'and I'll

see after her to-morrow. I live where she is go-

ing to. Wrap her up, you know, and—'

'Ready, sir,' says the coachman, 'the other in-

side are in.'

We bowed away. For a few minutes we did

not utter a word; at last the kind old man began

to rub his hands, and exclaim, 'Well, getting

out the so short a time as that circulates one's

blood! I feel all a glow—as warm as a toast?'

No doubt of it, but not a drop of the brandy and

water had passed his lips.

'May I say my uncle, placing the pegs leis-

urely and thoughtfully in the carriage-board, as

we sat waiting our share of the sparkling de-  
light on the hearth, after our easy supper, on the

same fire-night. 'Money,' my dear boy, is giv-

ing to us all manner of trouble. We had better

get to work. The reward for charity is un-pun-

ishable; it is immediate; witness the glow that per-

meates the heart when you give to those who are

in need and I'll tell you. On the contrary, the

continued misery of the foolish ones, who close

their hands and their hearts against the call of

to a miracle of warmth, was to me always like a

memorandum-book of generations. Little square

bits of long-departed pride, snipped from the

Sunday-going gowns of aunts and grandmothers,

all passed away, patterns of woman. Could it

have found tongues to praise of its possessors

what a strange history it would have been!

'Tick—tick—tick!' went the powerful old clock.

It had me at an advantage now, and would be

heard. It was an unusual sound to my metro-

politan ears, and I began counting its vibrations.

I positively felt as if I were swinging with its in-

defatigable pendulum. When I had almost got

at full swing, much to my annoyance, the light

of my candle, which I had placed on a well-pol-

ished old coffee, or clothes-chest, sent one of its

little rays upon the frame of a picture that hung

opposite to my bed. I knew the picture well; it

was a very poor drawing of a young female head,

with high dressed hair, and a little gypsy bonnet,

with floating ribbons. In fact, in the style of

the last century, so *à la mode* in our eyes at the

present day, as we, no doubt, shall be to the eyes

of a future day.

That picture was the skeleton of my uncle's

peaceful home. Those blue eyes and rosy cheeks

had made him a bachelor, but not a cynic. It

was no secret, everybody in the little village

knew of uncle's being 'crossed in love,' and so

I will tell you.

'More than half a century before, the gray-

headed old man, who slept in the next chamber

was the young athletic hero of the village-green.

From his independence, a sort of squire-happi-

ness, and the world of promise, before him. To

love was a part of his nature—the original of

that little picture was the object—she was an

orphan, though well provided for, brought up by

an old aunt, and had never quitted the village of

her birth. She was spoiled, and petted, by every-

body, who, of course, called her the village belle.

'Young, handsome, and rich for his position,

he soon became the favored swain, to the dismay

of many who had dared to hope. But who could

find him? none. The old people chuckled, and

said it was just as it should be—both rich, both

handsome, and both such kindly hearts, what a

merry wedding it would be.

'And so it had been—but fate decreed

otherwise; months rolled on, and she leaned

him arm at church and market, and the old peo-







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